DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

No. 4 1944

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LIBERTY FOR WHOM? FOR WHAT?

THE blurred shadow of the post-war world is falling across the sharply defined economic issues of the war. Many a wartime problem of commerce and trade required and received a ruthless solution. Efficiency had to come first. Now there is hope in many quarters, not only that there may be a slackening of wartime restrictions on the freedom of the individual, but that there may also be a return to the supposed benefits of *laissez-faire* in the field of economics. It is assumed that *laissez-faire* and liberty are synonymous.

Liberty for whom? War-time production has been in the interests of the product and the consumer. Is it a real gain to contrive that peace-time production shall be in the interests, not of these, but for the principal benefit of the producer? In distortion of old economic theories *laissez-faire* has come more and more to mean the producer's liberty to make a profit.

These considerations spring to mind following certain bitter excitements which have recently rocked the film trade press of Britain and the U.S.A. It begins in Britain with the Monopoly Report and in the U.S. with a certain alarm affected at what may be the line of development at the National Film Board of Canada. In each case the flesh of readers is required to creep at the prospect of Government intervention in the film industry developing to the point of complete Government control. The careful reader will, of course, discover that the foundation for these fears is non-existent : that no one in Britain seriously believes in the immediate prospect of complete nationalisation, nor does anyone in Canada suppose that a substantial part of Hollywood's studio space is to be taken over and run by the Canadian Government. Yet nothing less than these are the bogeys conjured up.

The intention is, of course, to force the Government out of any connection with the industry by mobilising the public against the imagined threat of nationalisation. One of the British film trade papers appears to have blossomed an Ottawa correspondent largely concerned with carrying on the anti-Government fight, whilst a leading U.S. periodical devotes great space to biassed accounts of the British situation, carefully giving the impression that all sections of the industry are strongly opposed to the recommendations of the Palache Committee in respect of Mr. Rank's monopoly.

Here indeed, in this very distortion, lies the crux of the matter. To what extent is the opposition to any Government activity in the film field an opposition to any attempt to associate the world's film industries with the public interest? To what extent is such opposition felt by any except those vociferous sections of the industry which do not identify their rôle with the public good? It will be found that the people who make films, the people who have a creative function in this creative medium, are not wildly in favour of the liberty of expression alleged to derive from private enterprise and the profit motive.

A great deal of recent attention has been attracted by an American plan designed to establish a closer relationship in the film industry between product and market. At first sight it would appear that the intention is to carry out a survey of public needs with the idea of planning production to satisfy them. What could be better? Closer inspection, however, will show that the plan boils down to a method of preparing the public to receive and welcome the product which the producer wishes to market. The process is not, find the need and create the product, but, find the product and create the need. This high-sounding audience survey is a guide merely to the methods of publicity demanded by the product in hand.

It has long been clear that the public in the cinema gets, not what it wants but what it is given, what it is profitable to give. It takes it and is taught to like it. Publicity has become a trade activity on a level of importance with the actual job of film-making. This is the position under the present set-up and neither Hollywood nor Rank's advisers want it disturbed by Governments stepping in and raising awkward questions about the film as a public service. For they realise that public service *doesn't* mean giving the public what you happen to have piled up on the counter.

So it is that the Ottawa correspondent of *The Cinema* dismisses as "arty" the ambitions of Canadian Citizens' Films Councils in "the proper development and supervision of moving pictures as a medium of visual education and for the creation of influences in the presentation of commercial films". So it is also that the *Motion Picture Herald* objects to a statement that the film industry may be foreseen "assuming the wider responsibilities of a public utility" and objects also to the proposition that "films are an integral part of the new policy toward the public aware that adequate information is the foundation of government by the people". A rumour reported in this periodical that the Provisional Government for the Republic of France proposes to "place the iron hand of absolute Government control" on the French film industry is horror enough to bring a main editorial to a speechless end. As an abiding policy we are primly told this could not square with "liberation".

We welcome that word liberation in reference to the world's film industries. But is it from the "iron hand of absolute Governmental control" that we need to be liberated?

DOCUMENTARY—A NATIONAL ASSET

From the start the documentary film has been concerned with education in the widest sense of the word; that is, with education aimed at producing a thinking, active, result-getting democratic community. Documentary chose film as its medium because film is *par excellence* the popular form of expression of this century (and when television comes it will be basically and inevitably a movie-medium).

The workers in the documentary film movement have therefore been primarily and deeply concerned in public service, since of all public services education is the most essential, if only too often the most neglected. The development of documentary during the present war only took place because of ten years of hard thought and hard work before September 1939, which formed the solid foundations for what has been achieved during the past few years. That achievement represents the establishment, on a permanent basis, of a national service of film education.

We use the phrase "permanent basis" because the organisation of the non-theatrical field is now so large and so well established that there can be no doubt of its permanence. What *may* be questioned, however, is how far the use of this powerful and essential educational weapon will continue to be controlled on democratic lines and fully in the interest of the people of this country.

Today there are three main groups concerned, for one reason or another, with the continuation and development of the educational film field, in which documentary has been, and still is, the key influence. These groups are (1) the State; (2) non-governmental sponsors (e.g. Industry, Commerce, the Co-operatives, etc.), and (3) the film trade.

I. The State

It is well-known that from its first inception documentary has been close-knit with Government, and indeed was nurtured in Government departments. Its basis of public service made this inevitable. But we shall very soon be faced with the long heralded demise of the Ministry of Information, including its Films Division, which among other things controls the nation's own film producing organisation, the Crown Film Unit; controls also the Colonial Film Unit, and has created the Central Film Library, which now supplies programmes of non-theatrical films on the most diverse subjects to an annual audience of over twenty million people. Through the Crown Film Unit, and to a much larger degree by contract to independent producers, the Films Division of the M.O.I. also meets the multifarious film needs of the various Departments of State.

Violent speculation is now taking place as to what is to happen to all these services when the M.O.I. is disbanded; but the general guess is that the nation is too deeply committed to this use of film as a national asset for them to be thrown away. Many people stress the fact that if we found it necessary in the emergency of war so to develop the widespread use of films for purposes of education, information and instruction, then we shall find it even more necessary to continue their development in the period of equal, if not greater, emergency on which, with the imminent defeat of the Axis, we are about to enter.

II. Non-Governmental Sponsors

The sponsorship of documentary films by industrial and commercial interests arose because the more enlightened of them realised that if their own prosperity rises and falls with the rise and fall of the prosperity of the community at large, then their relations to the community must to an increasing extent depend on conceptions of service rather than of suckerdom. Hence the appearance of "public relations" as well as "advertising", and the entry into the educational field by a number of industrial and commercial organisations. The spectacular development of the non-theatrical field in wartime is arousing increasing interest in this form of sponsorship; it is also arousing interest in the potentialities of the film medium as a travelling salesman to be charged with the job of re-establishing our overseas trade.

It seems clear that industrial sponsors will appear in great numbers as soon as the various priorities limiting film production are removed or relaxed. It seems equally clear that the new sponsors will have to learn fast the proper use of the medium; otherwise they will waste a great deal of money on films which attempt direct advertising —a fundamental and costly mistake.

III. The Film Trade

No longer does the Trade as a whole regard non-theatrical films as an irritating if minor menace to box-office receipts. Rather is there a lively interest in the commercial possibilities in this large and still developing field. Producers of short films see themselves partially relieved of the perennial problem of a non-profitable market in the public cinemas; for under the sponsorship system they are independent of distribution risks. Manufacturers of sub-standard apparatus and equipment see in the post-war world of visual education a happy market, with perhaps a sound projector needed in every school, for a start. Others see a fertile field in non-theatrical road-shows in the post-war world.

And with great unanimity the Trade commands the Government to get out of the field, except in certain respects, as for instance in regard to the finance which will enable the rapid equipment of schools with movie apparatus. In fact, there is a strong tendency for the film trade, which for so long alternately opposed and neglected the educational use of film, now to be very anxious to move in on the ground floor laboriously built by others—notably indeed by State and industrial enterprise.

Heaven knows one can only be glad that the Trade now sees the point. In a job so valuable to the nation the more the merrier. But no monopolies please. The film trade as a whole will always (and very properly) be mainly concerned with the entertainment film, and it has no right in the world to demand the sole interest—whether in the name of free enterprise or private profit—in the use of the educational film. It can make—if it will think clearly and with goodwill—an enormous contribution to the educational film field. But let it be remembered that education is something which belongs to the British people as a whole.

What must be sought—what particularly the documentary movement must seek—is the means of identifying the three interests we have just described in the task of post-war visual education. Close collaboration between the State, Industry and the Film Trade is essential.

This journal has frequently stressed the necessity of State enterprise in the field of the educational film; and as a result it has been violently accused of demanding a Government monopoly while opposing a trade (or Rank) monopoly. Once again, with our well-known patience, let us point out that what is needed is not a monopoly, but a system by which the use of film as an educational medium is not separated from the will and wish of the people. The Ministry of Education is the nation's agent for carrying out a hard won policy of compulsory education on democratic lines. Local Education Authorities, equally importantly, are local community agents for the same purpose. Both the Ministry and L.E.A.'s must have active as well as passive powers in all educational matters, films among others. Therefore you cannot deny them the right to engage themselves in films.

This does not mean that you deny to Industry and to the Film Trade an equal right to engage in educational films. The more the merrier. One thing only is an absolute prerequisite, and that is the means of ensuring (*a*) the highest quality in production and projection, and (*b*) a constant, planned output, without idiotic redundancies, of educational films covering *all* educational needs.

The film trade alone, working on a basis of voluntary finance which must re-coup its costs and profits from distribution and exhibition, cannot meet these needs. Many educational films of great importance involve very high production expenditure, but, because of their specialised nature, are shown only to few and often very small audiences. You can't ask a voluntary producer to undertake them; unless, of course, he has attained such a large measure of control of the whole field that he feels, from time to time, and maybe according to personal whim rather than national interest, that he can afford to throw away a few thousands rather in the same way as Hollywood affords to make shorts which are given away with a pound of features.

This country cannot afford to deprive itself of hundreds of educational films because the profit-motive does not reside in them. Nor can it afford an unco-ordinated programme in visual education. For this, if for no other reason, the existing participation of the State in their making and dissemination must continue, And in order to continue, it must have the goodwill and backing, maybe for differing reasons, of the trade as a whole, and of the industrial sponsor.

There are, of course, plenty of other reasons for State participation. Not least of these is the fact that Britain is under the urgent compulsion of finding a new and positive place for herself in the world. We shall publish an article in our next issue which will deal with this particular problem in its historical perspective.

The projection of this country overseas can in part be attained by the export of first-class entertainment films (though this does not mean they must cost £500,000 each); and the British film industry today is achieving an output of essentially British films which is certainly better than ever before. This remains a fact, quite apart from various pressing arguments as to the rightness of the policy being pursued by J. A. Rank.

A Growing Market

But we have other movie contributions to make than in terms of feature films for entertainment purposes. Britain's major gift to world cinema has undoubtedly been the documentary film; and there is a growing market in the non-theatrical field overseas for British documentaries. In the United States alone the showings of British documentaries are already widely and efficiently organised; and there are very few countries to which they are not sent.

Now our documentaries are not despatched overseas for the purpose of making a cash profit. They are sent because it is our national policy to make and send them. During the next few years it is essential that this policy should be an enlightened one, and that it should not reduce itself to a form of national advertising as such. We in Britain have much to give the world in terms of special knowledges and skills and techniques which we have discovered and developed. Giving is the best method of national projection.

Our overseas films should be contributions to the peoples of other countries in terms of activities and problems which today are common to all peoples. Activities and problems which concern agriculture, or machinery, or medicine, or trades union organisation, or nutrition, or any of the thousand and one urgencies which concern the world community today.

In so far as this is a matter of national policy, it is a State concern, for how otherwise can policy be laid down? But here, too, as various public utilities have already proved in practice, is a wide and fertile field for industrial sponsorship. It remains to be seen how far it will be followed, or how far new sponsors will limit themselves to trying to advertise branded goods, or in general to provide background "interest" films of industrial processes. The opportunities are enormous, if sponsors will identify themselves with national policy in this respect.

The brief survey of the situation contained in this article concerns more particularly all workers in the documentary field; for people in documentary must be missionaries as well as film makers.

That some period of confusion will ensue on the defeat of Germany seems inevitable. Equally inevitable is the fact that the documentary movement is on the verge of an even greater expansion than that which took place during the war. For, whatever methods of action may arise from the complex cross-issues and interests we have just discussed, one thing is quite certain, and that is that the wide use of film for education and national projection has come to stay. Only by a defection from duty on the part of the documentary movement can it be seriously endangered, for in that case the medium would be torn to bits or misused—perhaps with the most idealistic motives, perhaps with malice prepense—by groups and interests whose qualifications and intentions do not match the needs.

The time has come for a close re-focussing and centralisation of documentary effort. Clear thinking, a quick political eye, and above all a basic loyalty to the documentary idea have never been more essential to all workers in this field. We must pool our experience, centralise our efforts, and, in a word, continue to act with that unanimity of purpose which not merely made documentary, but has ensured its continuous and successful growth for over fifteen years, and will, if it sticks to its conception of public service, continue to develop it as a national and international asset.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Red Menace in Senate House

Recent criticisms of the Films Division of the M.O.I. appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* seem to have been directed at the wrong target. Indeed the principal faults adduced—of delay in the release of military material, of inadequate coverage by the Services units, of poor British propaganda in neutral countries—these weaknesses seem to have their origin in the Services and in the British Council. As an ex-employee of Films Division the writer of the article must have known where to lay the blame. Tucked away amongst his complaints there is a suggestion that too much Films Division energy has been expended on "Left-wing propaganda pieces", and to allay any curiosity as to which M.O.I. films are held to warrant this description we are assured that the offending productions have never seen the light of day. Perhaps these skeletons in the Films Division cupboard rattle only in the imaginations of ex-employees. In any case we are not sure that a few so-called "Left-wing propaganda pieces" (visible ones) might not have achieved more in elucidation of the British cause and have been of more comfort and encouragement to our armies than the accounts of British military might which the writer calls for.

Art for Terry Ramsaye's Sake

The *Motion Picture Herald*, that journal of the aesthetes, is affronted. Objecting to the "intrusion of political ideologies" in the British reviews of *The White Cliffs of Dover*, M. P. H. concludes that "reactions and comment are nationalistic, rather than artistic". On behalf of the British press we apologise.—O, do with this little island what you will, dread Hollywood. From your Parnassian slopes, where Sinatra and the gentle Abbott gambol, where Costello calls and ever the horrid Karloff lankly pursues, do thou but mould our foibles into the super-special shape of some colossal feature. Visit us with thy art and we obedient to thy servant the ruddy *Motion Picture Herald*, will hearken his trumpet-note knowing that through the voice of Ramsaye the muses speak.

Quota

The Quota Act is due for renewal and a majority of short-film makers are pressing for the insertion of a "cost" clause for shorts. This would enable the Act to assist preferentially those short films on which sufficient money has been expended to permit of good quality. A similar provision for feature films introduced into the expiring Act had the effect of largely eliminating the cheap "quota quickie" and improving the average quality of British films. There seems to be no reasonable argument against a similar measure on behalf of shorts.

C.B.C. Talk on Visit to Normandy and Brittany

By John Grierson

Two Sundays ago I was driving in a jeep from Britanny to a Canadian encampment near Caen. This was the day before the great Canadian breakthrough from Caen toward Falaise. Going south in the morning, we had kept to the main roads through Bayeux, St. Lo, Ville Dieu, Avranches, Pontoison to the very shadow of St. Malo. They were stiff with convoys of trucks and guns and tanks and what seemed a hundred solid miles of armoured might—rumbling like the wrath of God through the gentle countryside to the front. Air Command was complete. The dust of war spread a fine white powder over the apple trees. To-night we were keeping to the country lanes. It was one of these beautiful evenings which everyone who knows France will remember to the end of their days—the old, quiet Normandy of rich cornfields, large cows and large horses, straight scraggy hedges of poplar, elm and willow, quiet ready streams, orchards, soft gray farmyards—and as we sped along, a mere mile or two outside the terrible tide of war, the contrast seemed strange and unreal.

There were the people we used to know, taking their evening walk, *en famille*, dressed in their best Sunday black. The cows were in the fields. The geese marched with stately waddle across the road. An occasional finely-chiselled chateau with its walled garden shot a graceful salute from the 17th century into the evening light. But there was a deep connection, too, between this peaceful scene and the war beyond, for as we passed, each and every group stopped on their way and took off their hats and waved to us frantically, and the children were held high up in their parents' arms and waved too. This jeep of ours, with its great white star, was in its very minor way, a symbol of liberation.

Destruction

That is the dreadful paradox in France to-day. The armies are smashing their way through the French towns and villages, and cannot always take account of the things they must destroy. Caen is in ruins. St. Lo is a pile of rubble. The centre of Avranches has been torn out. The people have lost much. They have lost their relations and their property. In the worst places, they have to build their life again from the very foundations. And yet, as I saw it, their liberation so dearly paid for means more to them than anything else. In the north, amongst the ruins, the reaction is a trifle subdued as in all humanity you might expect. In the south, where the Americans have swept quickly through without so much opposition, the reaction is delirious. It has been so delirious that in many places the people have rushed out to meet the oncoming Americans even before the Germans have gone from the other end of the street, and they have been shot at and killed by the Germans in the very moment of their freedom.

I spoke to many who were sad, but to none who were not eager and friendly. Down in the south they lined the main roads all day long. One had the impression that they felt a compulsion to salute each and every vehicle that passed through. They used the two-fingered sign of La Victoire. Everybody did. And every man that could do so, paraded the old steel helmet of France, as sign and symbol that the warrior spirit of France needed only this occasion to assert itself in its old glory. The name of de Gaulle was on the people's lips, everywhere.

I found these things vastly moving, and so I think did every soldier. There was an air of simple, deep understanding between these common people from different lands, that after all the mistakes and misunderstanding of the past, I never expected to see. Here, some Canadian soldiers were helping an old woman retrieve scraps of bedding and furniture from her ruined home. There, a homesick soldier from the prairies in his time off was giving a peasant a hand with his crops. On a doorstep, and I assure you, not for the cameras, another soldier sat nursing a baby, to remind him of his own, back home. A field kitchen in a farmyard cooked for its troops right alongside a Frenchwoman with an outdoor fire preparing her mid-day meal. A Canadian correspondent sat on the wall of a millstream tapping out something for his newspaper, while a small French boy with puckered forehead looked over the correspondent's shoulder as he typed. Soldiers washed their clothes happily and sang by a hedgerow, while only a hundred yards down the road the women at the village washing-pool chattered and beat their clothes to death in the time-old way. You will not wonder if I bring you back this message from one of the towns I passed through. There the people were kind enough to give me a meal, and I tell you cheerfully that it included a French omelette as big as a house, with local cider to wash it down and a fine de maison. But what was perhaps more wonderful was that in the midst of it a group of local people came to the door. The leader asked was it true that I had just arrived all the way from Canada. I said yes, it was, and he made a speech and everyone applauded and he asked me when I got home I please say: Que les francais aiment bien les Canadiens (that the French are very fond of the Canadians). Before I went to France General Stuart told me that I would be carried away by the spirit of the troops. I found that it is a proud thing to be part of a victorious Army, but a prouder thing still to be part of a liberating Army. We have obviously entered upon something more than a military operation. We have entered upon an international crusade and I only hope we shall forever keep it that way.

War organisation

But this itself could not have come about without the complex organisation which modern war demands. The other most vivid memory I have of France to-day is of the cool, precise preparation and planning at Canadian Headquarters—of the disposition and timing of bombers and fighters, tank brigades and infantry, of the vast supply columns of shells and bombs, oil and food, bridge parts and assault boats, bulldozers, steamrollers, cement mixers and telegraph poles, and a hundred other complicated and crazy gadgets which I knew nothing about. They have made a deep-sea port in the short matter of a week or two from the bare sea-swept beaches on which we landed. Miles of deep water harbourage have appeared by magic, in what must have been one of the most gigantic feats of engineering ever undertaken by the British Navy. The weight of material that pours off the transport ships by day and night is on a scale that defies the imagination. It pours over the roads and occupies in many places every hedgerow and every field. Somewhere there is a master plan, moving it, the men and the machines, to a pattern of action and a time-table of achievement. All I can say, as a layman, is that everything seemed to know where it was going, and was going there fast. . . .

For myself, I come back with the thought of France more dear to me than ever. I have seen a statue to the future of France stand up unharmed from a heap of ruins. I have looked out again from the top of Mont. St. Michel. On the wall beside me a German notice said ACHTUNG, ACHTUNG, THE ENEMY IS LISTENING. It was the last remainder. For the guns were booming over the bay where the citadel of St. Malo was falling, and everywhere I looked from that mighty cathedral, France was French again.

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stands for the use of film as a medium of propaganda and instruction in the interests of the people of Great Britain and the Empire and in the interests of common people all over the world.

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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Le Journal de la Résistance.

THIS is the full-length, 40 minute version of the liberation of Paris by the F.F.I., short extracts from which have already appeared in the newsreels. Those who saw the newsreel shots will know what to expect: here is none of the romantic heroism, the pep-talk propaganda, which the film makers have tried to kid us that war consists of. Here is the real thing, hate and brutality, blood and death, all overclouded with that dreamlike air of unreality that always accompanies scenes of excitement, violence and danger. The whole atmosphere is one of savage hatred; Germans going up in flames like human torches as a grenade sets their petrol lorry alight, the wounded young German soldier lying on the ground with bullets spattering round him, and the woman running out to roll his corpse over like a sack of potatoes and get his rifle, the Frenchman lying on the pavement in a bath of his own blood, just beginning to congeal, the women for the umpteenth time in the history of Paris building barricades out of paving stones, or running with stretchers and improvised Red-Cross flags through the flying bullets to pick up the wounded; the prisoners coming in; Germans scared, sullen or just plain oafish; collaborators in a jitter of panic and somehow surprised and hurt that they should be in a situation where they can't change sides again, in the sudden realisation of the mean and cynical that there actually are people who put a cause before their personal comfort. And finally the entry of Leclerc (with his tank-crews of Spanish Republicans) and de Gaulle, and the people going wild with that special fierce joy and patriotism that is part of the French people. Technically, it is a marvel that this stuff was ever shot—where they got their cameras and film stock from I can't imagine—and the cameraman seems seldom out of danger. Some of the hand-held tracking shots are terrific, and add tremendously to the air of tension and excitement of the whole film.

In a way, *Le Journal de la Résistance* is a special tribute to the people of Paris, a people which has always kept its nose firmly in the middle of politics and seized the least opportunity to proclaim its views forcibly. Every Parisian, working or middle class, reserves to himself the right when he doesn't fancy something that's happening, to *descendre dans les rues*. Where the German unemployed flung themselves into rivers, out of windows, or into the S.A., the French went down into the streets and beat up the police. Why, they'd even riot about a film—against *Kameradschaft*, for instance, on the Champs Elysées and for it in the working-class quarters. It's that fierce, active, political spirit that comes out in this film: that spirit has its weaknesses no doubt, but it does at least make sure that Paris frees itself and can decide its own future, without the kind and dampening attentions of allied politicians. That is what makes this a film which everyone must see.

MARCH OF TIME. Racial Problems. No. 2. 10th Year. 17 minutes.

This issue of the *March of Time* deals with the racial and religious differences existing in the U.S.A., and although one welcomes its distribution over here, it would be interesting to know what sort of reception it has had in America, particularly in the South. Bearing in mind the state of feeling among the advocates of "white supremacy" in many of the States, the film seems a pretty courageous effort to state firmly the principle of racial and religious equality.

The actual shooting is not particularly exciting, relying very largely on speeches from various people prominent in civic life—newspaper editors, priests, educationalists and politicians—condemning racial or religious intolerance as contrary to the principles of the American Constitution. It is interesting to find that these advocates are not confined to the Northern States but carry through their propaganda in the areas where hatred and discrimination against the coloured peoples has been most persistent. A strong point is made that there are half a million coloured men and women in the armed services and that it is a grave injustice to deny them the full rights of citizenship while expecting them to shoulder the ultimate responsibility of defending their country with their lives.

Within these terms the film does a good job, but it would have been good to see a wider vista of the colour problem in the American scene. Only a fleeting mention is made, for instance, of the fact that the C.I.O. Unions recognise no colour bar. Even in Detroit there are scores of coloured Trade Union officials, and white and coloured workers work amicably side by side on the same machines. Racial riots are provoked by outside sources. An analysis of some of these factors would have been welcome, but so far as it goes the film will, let us hope, contribute something towards eradicating an evil that all good friends of America abhor.

Left of the Line *Produced* by the British and Canadian Army Film Units. M.O.I. 27 mins.
The film story of D-Day, eagerly awaited by the public, is a satisfactory, if unimaginatively constructed photographic record of the advance of the British and Canadian armies through France and Belgium. The preparations for the invasion and the landings on the Normandy beaches provide exciting material, but the rest seems to be a re-hash of newsreel footage already seen in the cinemas. Either because there wasn't time, or because the producers were too close to it all, the total effect is a little disappointing when compared with the magnitude and excitement of the event itself. It is to be hoped that a more considered and longer document is in preparation, if only for the enlightenment of future generations.

New Builders. Paul Rotha Productions, 1944. *Direction:* Kay Mander. *Photography:* W. Suschitsky. M.O.I. 22 mins.
Subject: The training of boys for the building industry.
Treatment: Boys learning at technical institutes the various jobs connected with building. Plastering, plumbing, carpentry, brick laying, then on an actual job—the building of two farm workers' cottages. On a meadow two men are working with a theodolite, marking out the site and fascinatingly the cottages begin to take shape. This is one of the most perfect sequences that has been in a commentated film for many a day. Foundations, walls, rafters, tiles, plumbing, doors, windows—until at last you want to get up and have a go at it yourself. Finally instructions for boys on how to get into schools or to be apprenticed.

The film's job is to influence boys to take up building as a job and it is completely successful. It shows the craftsmanship of building as important and satisfying work, and will give any boy an honest and practical start.
Propaganda Value: Excellent.

A Farm is Reclaimed. *Production:* Campbell-Harper. *Direction:* Alan Harper. Made for the Scottish Department of Agriculture. Non-T. M.O.I. 15 mins.
Subject: Ploughing up of a derelict Scottish farm.
Treatment This is a simply made film with a pleasantly naïve quality about it. A farmer takes on a tough assignment in the shape of a 200-odd acre farm where no work seems to have been done for years. The buildings are falling to pieces, the house is uninhabitable, the fences are down, and the land has been let go for rough grazing. However, with the help and advice of the War Agricultural Executive Committee and the use of a lot of complicated and expensive machinery, the land is all ploughed up—the valley fields for cereals, the hill fields re-seeded for sheep and cattle. It all costs a lot of money, but what with Government grants, subsidised prices, etc., the farmer finally can see a nice profit in it. The film shows most of what you want to see in the way of the work done, the commentary is nicely calculated and there's a good human feeling about the farmer and W.E.A.C. members. It's only when it's all over that you realise that you have seen nothing of the people who have done all the work, that the farmer, since the farmhouse was uninhabitable, must have lived in town and travelled out by car, and that the necessity to present farming as a sound business proposition shows very clearly what a fundamental revolution is necessary in country life.
Propaganda Value: Very good for Scottish farmers.

Some Like it Rough. Public Relationship Films. *Production:* Lewis Grant Wallace. *Direction:* Dr. Massingham. M.O.I. 16 mins.
Humorous treatment is not a strong point with most M.O.I. films, and whoever thought up this one had a bright idea which Massingham has put over very neatly. An American soldier meets up with an English soldier and tells him that American football is "murder". The Englishman advances the view that it is no tougher than the English game and is promptly challenged to have a try at it, with disastrous results to his own person. To get his own back he lures the American into a game of Rugger. After being chucked all over the field by a bunch of hearty toughs, the Yank decides that maybe the Englishman is right.

The story, simple enough, depends entirely on its treatment for effect. The whole thing is played in a sort of early René Clair style, including a black-coated undertaker solemnly handing out his cards to the stretcher cases as they are carried off the field. John Sweet (of *Canterbury Tale*) plays the Yank in his artless, engaging manner, the sound track shows much originality, the football games are shot with terrific gusto and although the propaganda message, if any, is obscure, the whole thing adds up to a friendly, jolly film which can't possibly offend anybody.

(*continued overleaf*)

Two Views on "Our Country"

Our Country. *Production:* Strand for M.O.I. *Direction:* John Eldridge. *Photography:* Jo Jago. *Music:* William Alwyn. Specialised commercial. 50 minutes.

Subject: A lyrical look at the face of war-time Britain.

Treatment: This film wanders gracefully, if somewhat nebulously, from the ships of Liverpool, through the bombed streets of London, the apple orchards, hopfields and airfields of Kent, the mining valleys of South Wales and the steelworks of Sheffield, up to the West Indian lumber camps in Scotland, to finish round a bottle of rum in the cabin of a trawler tied up at Point Law, Aberdeen. The different sections are held loosely together by a merchant seaman (David Sime), who travels from one place to the other on his tour of inspection on foot, by lorry, by car, by train, with his kitbag slung over his shoulder and a ready welcome waiting for him everywhere. He joins the apple and hop-pickers in Kent, gets an invitation to a harvest supper, watches the Welsh miners sing, picks up a girl in Sheffield, rides on a train with the engine driver, jitterbugs with the lads from Honduras and boozes with the trawlermen of Aberdeen, all in an atmosphere of almost painfully perfect friendliness. The whole film is exquisitely shot and, in particular, beautifully photographed—not so much the conventional over-filtered landscapes and cloud effects as the natural, effective low-key scenes as the seaman wanders around St. Paul's or the railway station. And there are many pleasant incidents—the tough dame in the hopfields darning his sock, the vicious-looking Welsh schoolmaster with his temporarily unterrorised class, and, best of all, the firm masculine ring and bite of the Welsh miners singing. But of its very nature and approach the film suffers from vagueness and woolliness. It has one of those "poetic" commentaries (the style of the whole film is impressionistic) which pound on and on with very little relation to what the picture's doing—like somebody determined to finish a funny story in spite of the fact that all the company is busily engaged on something else—and which I'd sincerely hoped we'd seen the last of; and, for once, Bill Alwyn's music is disappointing. The director has, I think, concentrated on trying to give an impression of good looks, and of a natural unforced "Christian" friendliness, which no doubt he finds the most pleasant characteristic of British life, and in that he has in a large measure succeeded. It is a pity that this air of well-meaning friendliness should carry, like the vicar's fixed smile at the village fete, such an effect of coldness and gutlessness. I should have thought the warmth and strength of those Welsh miners or the toughness of that Welsh schoolmaster were the British qualities to-day more in need of exploration for ourselves and of presentation for the world. But that is not to deny that this is a very good-looking and well-made film.

Propaganda Value: Good prestige among the artistically inclined.

* * *

The stress and urgencies of war do not make for experiments in technique. For the past five years documentary has been developing the various shapes and formulæ which were evolved during the Thirties, and which were, in 1939, so diverse that they formed first-class foundations for the period of rapid expansion which has since taken place. Documentary has in no sense been marking time. But new methods have, in general, been forced to await a period of somewhat different atmosphere. It is a likely guess that such a period, whose prerequisite is not so much leisure as a definite mood which war usually damps, is about to open.

Highly significant therefore is *Our Country*, which is, as far as I know, the sole and successful experimental film of the war period. It says important things in a new way. And because this new way involves poetry, impressionism, and in general a lyrical approach, the film may, perhaps, be a source of controversy and perhaps heart-searching amongst documentary workers who have for so long had their noses pressed against the war-time grindstone.

Now it would be absurd to urge everyone in documentary to make films like *Our Country*. In the first place John Eldridge is the only person who can; and in the second place it is a film which is important in itself, for what it is; and that is the sort of film which documentary ought to produce at least once in every five years.

Our Country says a great deal about Britain, and says it with deep emotion. It uses film-continuity in a specially exciting manner, and one which it has always been difficult to bring off; for it involves an absolute logic arising not from a definite story, but from a flow of visuals and sounds (Alwyn's score is his best so far) which achieve logicality because they are purely and simply film. You can't translate the plot of *Our Country* on to paper; it doesn't belong on paper, only on celluloid. You can do no more than say that the film is about a sailor who comes ashore in wartime and participates, as a visitor from another world, in the lives and work, fears and happinesses of men and women and children everywhere in these Islands. You may add, if you like, that there is a prologue by an American soldier; add to that there is a girl who is there because she is your girl or mine (and therefore in this film, the sailor's—watch, please the lovely reversed continuity by which Eldridge gets this point across, thus achieving universality without making a dreary "symbolic woman" at the same time).

For fifty minutes this waking dream, or rather this live vision of the inwardness of our daily life, evokes both thoughts and emotions which you cannot find other than valid. By rights it should be noticeably episodic, but it is not; indeed it is so much the reverse that after it is over you feel that everything has been su imposed on everything—and yet every single facet is in itself as clear as crystal.

It would be idiotic to claim perfection. There are things wrong in the film—patches of commentary which are a mere combination of hurriedly spoken words, and which stand out all the more alarmingly amongst the long stretches in which Dylan Thomas succeeds for the first time in wedding (and subordinating) his style to the needs of the medium. There are some unnecessary repetitions of mood, and, thereby, of type-visuals.

But in general the film achieves a genuine integrity, of aesthetic and sentiment (in the proper use of that misused word); and it is an object lesson in inspired shooting. Eldridge has developed his technique slowly, and obviously with much pain and grief, but here he comes out on top, with an ability to portray the most trivial gestures and sights of our daily life with an insight and affection which move us because they are not tricks, but truth. What he does next will be of prime interest to documentary. He cannot repeat himself, because *Our Country* is of itself, and inimitable; but his personal approach to our medium is bound to bring documentary something it needs.

Summer Film School, St. Andrews

At St. Andrews in August, the Scottish Youth Leadership Training Association sponsored a week's residential film school. Its aim was to instruct youth leaders in the use of film for the benefit of youth organisations. The school had the co-operation of the Scottish Educational Film Association, the Scottish Film Council, the Fife Education Authority and the cinema trade in the provision of lecturers and of equipment and accommodation. Miss Isabel Sinclair, the Scottish film critic gave talks, one of them on Film Appreciation.

The students, who numbered 25, were instructed in the use of projectors and equipment, viewed a number of documentary and other films and listened to a variety of talks covering such subjects as the construction of the film story, the teamwork of the film production unit and the use that could be made of the commercial cinema.

SIGHT and SOUND

A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational and entertainment values

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Movie Parade

By John Huntly

PARTY, Atten—shun!" A hundred R.A.F. trainees stand before a large drab hall marked Station Cinema. It has a small foyer, a pay box, and a few stills on the walls, but otherwise it is no different from the rest of the buildings.

"Stand at Ease!" A burly navigator-to-be points to a photo of to-night's show and raises an up-turned thumb to his pal. It is Betty Grable; *Coney Island* is on.

"Lead in, the front file." A wireless operator is preparing for a sleep. An L.A.C. with the dirty cap badge thinks these information things are a dead loss; he says so.

"Follow on, the remainder." A flight mechanic thought the one about the shipyards last week was pretty good. His "oppo." thinks these civvies get too much money.

"Cut out the smoking; this is a parade!" The Sergeant considers this cinema business is a good racket; he will probably be able to nip back to the mess for a natter with the new Warrant Officer.

In the projection room a fellow who used to work at the Odeon is threading up. Bit of a bind, these afternoon shows, especially with to-night's feature not checked yet. Blinking Yanks, too; hope that join in the second reel holds out. All the boys settled now. House lights—motor on—curtain—picture—sound; he looks out through the glass port hole.

The cinema is plain with distempered walls (a sort of light colour) and harsh white lamps in a false ceiling. The wooden floor slopes back and the seats are tip-ups. Fair sized stage, a few coloured lights and a decent curtain; the place was once a hangar.

The American Scene . . . I. Swedes in America. The speakers blare forth music; the sound quality is good. "Who cares about bloody Swedes", says an A.C.2. A shot of Ingrid Bergman appears, telling us what the Swedes are doing in America. "She's a wizard girl," says a Pilot who has now come off "ops", "I saw her in *Casablanca*."

In his home in Los Angeles, a director can smile, for he was right. Getting Miss Bergman to do that commentary assured the audience's attention.

In the factory, in the Army, at home, at a dance, in the shops; we know what the Swedes look like in America. We also see that they are a democratic people whose ideas are well suited to the American way of life. Miss Bergman bids us farewell. "Tame," says an apprentice fitter.

What So Proudly We Hail . . . "Made for General Motors Ltd. by Sound Masters, Inc." Shades of the Gas Industry! The Yanks have heard about John Grierson and don't see why they shouldn't do it as well. Here is a good picture of an American family and the boys sit quiet and absorb the factory and mother and the kids and . . .

"I knew that blasted join wouldn't hold" says the operator. Howls and whistles from the boys. Over the sprocket, through the gate, over the sprocket, into the sound, over the sprocket . . . More howls and whistles.

". . . is the automobile factory where he puts in a 5 day week . . ." On we go. "Not bad, that" is the verdict. "Too much flagwagging as usual" says a regular moviegoer. "Another of those *March of Time* commentaries" says another.

Next comes *The Home Place* made by some American Agriculture Department. It is a tedious catalogue of American farms and houses and everyone is bored. You can tell by the restlessness.

Common Cause by Verity Films. This is not Americans, but everyone. The cutting is clever and it gets its point across with a real sting. This is the stuff to give the troops, but those forced speeches always want watching.

Finally, pure instruction from *Beware, Butterfly Bomb About.* "Grim things, them bombs" . . . "I wondered what the b—— looked like" . . . "Not for me" . . . and so on. Everyone was deeply impressed. The attention to detail made the reconstruction real, the production made it clear, the direction gave it a punch.

House lights, a rumble increasing to a roar as a hundred springs reassert their seats to the retracted position, and the boys file out into the sunlight. They have all learnt something (except those two who slept right from the start—been on the beer last night).

Swedes in America was quite competent but it was too national and rather unimportant. *What So Proudly* was national as well, but it was treated with neat intimacy and aroused interest by "how the other side lives" angles. *Common Cause* was wide enough in scope but again the personal touch scored. Service audiences are also very appreciative of those little intimate details that make good documentary.

Nothing is more fatal than the catalogue type of travelogue. *The Home Place* was a grim example, but loads of these travelogues make the same mistake. Photos in a book or lantern slides can give a catalogue of views and buildings.

Perhaps after all the best use of the educational film lies in *Butterfly Bomb.* The educationals that spring to my mind are always *The New Fire Bomb*, Arthur Askey showing how not to sneeze, or watching a four-stroke engine in action. But then facts are more obvious than ideas, and *Common Cause* may have instilled a subconscious lesson equally as strong as *Butterfly Bomb.*

At the larger camps, the cinema parades are gradually becoming organised, but a tremendous amount of improvement is still needed in the use of the 16mm. projectors. Here breakdowns are a regular occurrence and presentation often unimaginative. However the value of the film for the general education of the forces, along with discussion groups and information centres, speaks for itself. Service personnel always jump at a visit to the cinema in or out of working hours and with good material now coming from the studios the position of the educational film is slowly becoming stabilised.

"Party, atten—shun! To the right—Dismiss!"

New Soviet Films By Oleg Leonidov

by permission of Soviet War News

SCIENTIFIC and educational films constitute one of the most essential branches of Soviet cinematography, and aim to popularise and clarify scientific problems for students and schoolchildren. Such films have been extensively used in wartime as a medium of military training. They also serve a useful function in the army medical services. The screen shows major operations, newly-discovered methods of treating wounds, post-thesis, etc., which aid young doctors at the front to widen their scope of knowledge, to gain greater skill, and to restore the maximum number of wounded to the fighting ranks.

Two hundred titles of technical-educational films are released annually in the U.S.S.R. Among others there are pictures on the use of trophy arms, on tank and sapper troops, on "Modern Medicine in the Patriotic War", "Injuries to the Skull and Brain," "Plaster Casts," "Physiotherapy," "War Medicine on the Western Front," A.R.P. training of the civil population.

A series of educational films have been made especially for railway workers, under the auspices of the Cinema-Lecture Bureau of the Central Administration of the Educational Institutions of the People's Commissariat of Railways. The motion pictures, accompanied by lectures, may be seen at goods stations, in locomotive depot laboratories, and railway workshops.

Many young people came to work on the railways during the war, and it was vitally important to improve their technical skill. In 1943 at one Moscow railway junction alone, over 500,000 people attended shows of educational films accompanied by lectures. Switchmen and signallers saw the whole switch and signalling system; railway conductors got an idea of the cars, young engineers were shown the intricacies of the locomotive. There are films on the economy of fuel, on railway maintenance, on methods of speedy restoration of lines in liberated districts. Mobile cinemas with these films follow in the wake of the advancing troops of the Red Army.

In addition to educational-scientific motion pictures "Glavetkhfilm" (Central Technical Films Administration) Studios are producing a number of so-called popular science shorts. They include, for example, *Stage Stars, White Fang* by Jack London, *Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov*, and others. In *Stage Stars* produced by Valdimir Yurenev, the spectator will see the foremost actors of the Moscow Art Theatre working on a new production.

The film on the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov will be of exceptional interest. It will give extracts from the most popular of his operas, performed by the best orchestras and singers in the U.S.S.R. in theatres of the multi-national peoples of the Soviet Union, in their native languages—Georgian, Kazakh, Russian, Tajik, Armenian and Ukrainian. The film is being produced by order of the Soviet government in connection with the recent centenary of the composer's birth. One of Rimsky-Korsakov's favourite pupils and followers, Boris Asafiev, composer and music critic, will collaborate in its production.

Technical films have become very popular with Soviet audiences, and have received a high praise from the Government, which attributes great cultural value to this field of cinematography. Thus, *The Depths of the Sea*, and *The Force of Life*, produced by Alexander Zguridi, and cameramen Mikhail Piskunov and Gleb Troyansky, with the scientific advice of Professor Vladimir Lebedev and Peter Manteifel, were awarded Stalin Prizes. The central studios of educational-technical military films which during the war released a large number of these films on almost all branches of military science, were awarded the Order of the Red Star.

RÔLE OF THE "SHORTS"

WHAT rôle should the "short" play in the film society programme? Even when it meets the requirement of quality, it should not be merely something which fills out the programme to the desired running-time. A film society should have at least two reasons for showing a short: its demonstration of some advance in technique or experiment in subject-matter; and the complementary contribution it makes to the interest of the other films in the programme.

Programmes composed to a theme, once a revolutionary experiment, are now included in most film society seasons. There are several bases for choosing the films: technique, origin, content, period of production. As an example of the first, the use of music in films may be illustrated. Such a programme was given by the Ayrshire Film Society this season when it showed, with *Battle for Music*, *Troopship* (Richard Addinsell), *Paderewski*, and *Malta, G.C.* (Sir Arnold Bax). Other technique programmes are possible on colour, sound, décor, and the camera. For a programme on the camera I recommend societies to watch for a Columbia film, *Address Unknown*, in which the combination of William Cameron Menzies and Rudolph Maté produces an acutely picture-conscious treatment.

Films grouped under their country of origin normally offer little difficulty and it is one of the societies' duties to illustrate cinema achievement in other countries. During the war, however, this has not been possible except for America and Russia. The U.S.O.W.I. is bringing into the country a steady flow of films which make an American programme easy to compile. Among the latest films to arrive is *The Valley of the Tennessee* an illuminating account of the T.V.A. experiment, with something of the dramatic power of *The River*. The arrangement of a Russian programme is greatly facilitated by *The Russian Story* which, with its excerpts from most of the outstanding Soviet films, does with ease in an hour or so what some film societies have previously laboured earnestly and unsuccessfully to do. If any society south of the Border is considering a Scottish programme, the new Scottish shorts (*Power for the Highlands*, *Highland Doctor*, *Crofters*, and the widely-praised *Children of the City*) make possible an attractive programme, with perhaps a revival of Michael Powell's *Edge of the World*.

Programmes based on content can have a wide and fascinating variety. For example, the London Film Institute Society opened its season with an unusual programme of crime films, in which *Children of the City* and a reel from *Blackmail* preceded Fritz Lang's *M*. I should like to see a programme on comedy with, perhaps, short pieces by Laurel and Hardy and W. C. Fields shown with a reel from a Marx Brothers film and *The Gold Rush*. Period programmes which carry the audience ten, fifteen, twenty years back in film time, can also be fascinating and revealing. A programme with *The Blue Angel* was a notable success in Edinburgh last season, and a similar programme, dipping further back in film history —the period of *The Last Laugh*—is being considered.

I find that, although there is no lack of short films of interest to film societies, news of their existence sometimes fails to reach those who would find it most useful. One of the reasons for this is that shorts are so rarely seen by the film critics; and even when they are seen, there is little space available to comment on them.

Among the new M. of I. films which societies should consider for their programmes are *The Grassy Shires*, first of the "Pattern of Britain." series; *Cotswold Club*, the story of a Village Produce Association; *The New Crop*, on timber and re-afforestation; *A Start in Life*, on health services for children; *Atlantic Trawler*, an impression of trawlermen at war; and *Night Flight*, a study of map-reading as an aid to navigation. These are in addition to the Scottish films mentioned above. It is probably a prejudiced viewpoint, but I consider *Crofters* the most beautifully photographed film of the war.

Of the British Council's films, produced primarily for showing abroad, there is a number which should interest film societies. *The New Mine* is an account of the new methods in use at the Comrie Colliery in Fife. *Cambridge* effectively conveys the town's architectural character and includes glimpses of the famous men who teach there. *Teeth of Steel*, in impressive technicolor, illustrates the work of giant excavators; it is to be followed by a more ambitious film in colour on the production of steel. *Accident Service* is a medical film in the tradition of the Council's successful *Surgery in Chest Diseases*.

There have been several recent additions to the "World in Action" series, produced in Canada by Stuart Legg under John Grierson's supervision. These include *War for Men's Minds*, on propaganda; *Labour Front*, on world manpower problems; and *Global Air Routes*, a stimulating discussion on international aviation.

In conclusion, one or two unrelated impressions: the improving quality of M.G.M. colour cartoons, *cf. Dumb-Hounded;* the liveliness of Georg Pal's work for Paramount; and the return to form of Robert Benchley, in, for example, *No News is Good News*.

H. FORSYTH HARDY

Film Societies

Edinburgh Film Guild opened its season with *Toscanini* and Duvivier's *The Heart of a Nation*. The second programme was *Circonstances Atténuantes* and *The Battle of Russia* and films announced include *The Childhood of Maxim Gorki*, *Strange Incident*, *Le Jour se Lève*, *Welcome to Britain*, and *Un Carnet de Bal*. A feature is to be made of Frank Capra's war films, shown in special programmes with British documentaries of the equivalent period. Last season's membership record has been broken and the roll has had to be closed.

Manchester and Salford Film Society has shown *Jacob Sverdlov* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*. *Men of Rochdale* and *Derrière la Façade* are announced. A Film Forum to express and discuss viewpoints on the cinema has been held monthly in the British Council rooms.

Dundee Film Society has decided to place a limit this year on its steadily growing membership. The season opened with the unusual American film, *The Remarkable Andrew*. *Un Carnet de Bal* is to be revived.

Film Society of Ayrshire followed its opening programme on music with *Le Dernier Tournant*. Performances will be held this season in Ayr only.

Aberdeen Film Society showed *Education de Prince* at its opening performance. The Capra war films will be included in later programmes.

★ *For your information*

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The "Cinemette"

By Richard Delaney

THE potentialities of 16mm. film must hearten everyone who prefers something more stimulating mentally than the novelette, and has despaired of ever seeing it in any quantity on the screen. In a suggestive article in a recent issue of DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER, Arthur Elton writes of the extensive place 16mm. films will have in the post-war cinema. Soon after the war, he says, everyone who can afford to buy a portable typewriter will find a mass-produced film camera within his means. This will result in the appearance of parish magazines, learned periodicals, local papers, minority pamphlets, and all the other commonplaces of literature and free speech. The article, which is entitled "Film Grammar", warns us of the danger of poor production in these films, and suggests as a preventative, courses of film making in schools. Though primarily concerned about technique, Mr. Elton does in passing suggest some of the important uses to which 16mm. film will be put. What we shall see on this gauge and where we shall see it, is a fascinating subject that deserves more detailed consideration. I should like therefore to develop a line of thought engendered by reading "Film Grammar", and predict an innovation which we can look forward to with particular certainty in the cinema of the future. This is the cinemette. (I could equally aptly have called it "little cinema"; but for euphony and brevity, I prefer "cinemette".)

Physically, the cinemette will be like an ordinary cinema, except that it will be much smaller and will be equipped for 16mm. sound projection. In every other way, and above all in what is exhibited, it will differ completely from its commercial parent. What it will resemble most is the learned periodical mentioned in the article quoted above. The programme will consist of short films, each averaging half an hour in length. These will have been selected by the editor-manager from the many contributions sent in by amateur producers. Programmes need not be confined to brand-new work by amateurs. "Penguin New Writing," ostensibly for new writers, always includes in its pages contributions from established authors. There is plenty of fine documentary and cartoon material in existence from which the editor-manager can draw to spice his bill of contents. Accepted films will be paid for, and will be screened daily for a fortnight; and later, as the supply increases, for a week only. Outstanding films will be listed by a central agency, which will make them available for other cinemettes. Films may also be sent direct to this agency for trade screening. The customary booking would then ensure.

Different houses will specialise in different fare. We shall inevitably have exhibitors showing films of little or no integrity, either in subject or treatment. This need not discourage us. The literary world is never free from publications at this level; yet at its best it constitutes an inspiring example to its sister arts, the theatre and the cinema. One editor-manager will become known for the seriousness and catholicity of his selections. His cinemette may become a miniature screen counterpart of Pelican Books. Another may present a movie *New Statesman*, interpreting and discussing the more complicated of our dealings with one another. We shall see, too,

(*continued overleaf*)

The "Cinemette" (*continued*)

as Mr. Elton suggests, the reflection of local activity in provincial journals and parish magazines. In fact, it may be confidently predicted that almost every pursuit of man that is at present served by a periodical, will be catered for on the screen.

Though this new arm of the cinema will have rent, maintenance and contributors to pay, it cannot be classed as commercial—for the single essential reason that its production will not be geared to the lowest common denominator of public intelligence. It will be free to attempt without interference—indeed with encouragement—high levels in technique and in material. In the latter, at any rate, it will shame its prostitute parent into reforming herself a little. Box-office competition will soon awaken the interest of Hollywood and her imitators. Will the cinemette be good box-office? Consider the thousands of people who comprise the membership of film societies; go to the theatre; belong to progressive organisations; read good books; in short, who aspire to independent thinking. Surely there will be found among these more than sufficient to build a steady clientele for the cinemette.

It is a platitude now to repeat the great benefit man has derived from the printed word. His debt to the photograph is usually underestimated; but it is, comparatively speaking, almost as great.

Letter from Pudovkin

(*by kind permission of Roger Burford*)

DEAR MR. BURFORD,

I am very glad to see that you are really in earnest about acquainting us with the various schools of British documentary films. I shall certainly make a point of seeing all the films you have mentioned at the Cinema Committee, and to have Eisenstein and Gerasimov join me in this. We shall arrange for a showing of the scientific films just as soon as you send them to VOKS. If you will only furnish me with the necessary material, I undertake to acquaint our Section with the productions of the leading British documentary directors. I could illustrate my report with certain of the films. When do you expect to receive *The Way Ahead*? To judge by the reviews, this film ought to be particularly interesting to us. The remark that "the film is based on an idea, and nothing but an idea" as contrasted with "a 'vehicle' for some contract star" makes me very impatient to see it. Its theme—"How, in time of war, an individual becomes a member of a corporate body" also promises to be interesting. And when I read the following words about the cast: "Bless their hearts, I had forgotten they were actors"—I was all the more convinced that this must be a significant and serious piece of work. Thank you very much for the book and for your kind attention to my interests other than those in cinema art.

I also enjoyed reading the reviews you sent.

Once more, I shall be waiting impatiently for your material on the leading schools of British documentary directors.

Yours sincerely,

V. PUDOVKIN

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Memphis Belle

By S/Sgt. James F. Scanlan

HIGH over Germany one fall morning in 1942, a squadron of Fortresses tightened their formation for the bombing run. In the lead ship, Major William Clothier slipped the filters on his camera. The altitude was 28,000 ft. Flakes of snow and ice clouded the windows. The temperature was 65 degrees below zero. Cold had frozen every gun in the Fort. From the side, a Junkers 88 pursuit made a quick pass at the waist position. Clothier aimed his camera, caught a few seconds of the attack. Then his camera went dead: it was frozen.

The Fort was committed to her bombing run. As the seconds preceding the bomb dropping slipped by, Clothier, with the aid of the radio operator, moved his camera forward. The bomb-bay doors opened. Clothier fumbled with the camera, finally made it work. The bombs dropped. Clothier shot several hundred feet. Then the camera went completely dead.

When the Forts had cleared the target, Vegesack, Germany, had been bombed for the first time. Of greater significances to Air Forces cameramen, however, was the fact that Clothier had taken the first aerial motion pictures of a bombing attack in this war. The meagre footage he obtained on that first mission was the beginning of over 16,000 feet shot during the succeeding months and later edited into the War Department film *Memphis Belle*.

At the request of Lt.-Col. William Wyler, Clothier had left R.K.O. Studios to make a photographic record of the fledgling Eighth Air Force. Departing for England with him was Lt. Harold Tannenbaum, R.K.O. sound-man. When the crew left for overseas, they were the first Army Air Forces combat camera unit to be sent into action.

A veteran of the last war, Tannenbaum was 47 and above Selective Service age, but again volunteered for combat duty. When the crew arrived in England, they found that their equipment had been sunk on a merchant ship in the Atlantic. Clothier and Wyler finally succeeded in borrowing a complete set of equipment, except sound, from Lt.-Comdr. John Ford, of the Navy. Then they started work on *Memphis Belle*.

Tannenbaum, having no sound equipment, volunteered for aerial combat duty. After receiving camera instructions from Clothier, he accompanied the Fortresses on their raids over France. On one of these missions, his Fortress was shot down over St. Nazaire. Tannenbaum was the first A.A.F. motion picture cameraman to be reported missing in this war.

To obtain combat shots of fighter attacks and the colour sequences now contained in *Memphis Belle*, Clothier made three flights over enemy territory. Wyler also accompanied the bombers and was awarded the air medal.

When he had secured enough combat footage, Clothier photographed activities at the air bases, including work of the ground crews, briefings, and each step in the preparing for the missions. He later photographed the decoration ceremonies for the crew of the *Memphis Belle*, and the visit of the King and Queen of England.

At the completion of this mission, Wyler and Clothier returned to the 1st Motion Picture Unit in Culver City. Wyler started work on the editing, dubbing and narration of the film. *Memphis Belle* was completed at the 1st Motion Picture Unit and then released by Paramount Pictures Inc. under the auspices of the Office of War Information through the War Activities Committee, Motion Picture Industries.

The cutting was completed by S./Sgt. Eric L. Harrison; narration was written by T./Sgt. Lester Koenig, and spoken by Eugene Kern an Cpl. John Beal. For this work, the 1st Mo Picture Unit was later commended by the H quarters Army Air Forces in a letter w stated:

"1. A motion picture now entitled *Memphis Belle* was recently completed for the Army Air Forces. The personnel of your command extended valuable co-operation in the writing of the narration, assembling and editing, musical scoring and recording, sound effects, cutting, animation and dubbing of the film.

"2. It is believed that the tireless effort and devotion to duty on the part of members of your organisation is reflected in the outstanding merit of the film."

After pioneering the field of aerial motion picture combat photography, Clothier trained a complete combat camera unit at the 1st Motion Picture Unit and then returned to England. Since his first flight over Vegesack, the 1st Motion Picture Unit has sent similar Combat Camera Units to every theatre of operations. They have covered targets in every theatre of the war, and completion of more pictures similar to *Memphis Belle* is now under way.

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THE FOX AND THE HUNTERS

A fox devoured a goose. The hunters caught the fox and began to beat him, whereupon he cried: "In vain do you beat me: it is not my fault that I have a bushy tail; God made me so." But the hunters said: "We do not beat you for having a bushy tail, but for eating the goose."

REALIST FILM UNIT LTD.

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DEAR SIR,

While I consider that Mr. Forsyth Hardy has given excellent advice to Film Societies (D.N.L. Vol. V, Nos. 2 and 3), I doubt if he has gone far enough into their functions as an advance guard. It is part of the problem of Film Societies that a number of the members would like to make films but have never bothered to do anything much about it, and that this negative attitude characterises a great many of the activities of Film Societies. The members are pleased to have good programmes and will put up with limited inconvenience but they do not want to do anything more positive. In Birmingham, only two or three per cent of a large and financially sound Film Society ever bothered to come to discussion meetings, and when it became difficult to get cinema space only this small isolated intellectual clique was left. The society temporarily closed down.

Film Societies need to be more than a convenience; they need a policy as well as film shows if they are to justify their existence and become an advance guard. Their members should be people who genuinely care about films and are prepared to take on some responsibility towards them. This is not an easy policy to put across, because it is in the nature of films that audiences accept even utter rubbish with the mildest of grumbles.

But, as Mr. Forsyth Hardy said, a Film Society is not doing its job unless its activities generally are helping to further the development of the film medium. And this development is not only linked with technical research or æsthetics, it is deeply concerned with audiences and box-office receipts, with methods of film production and the availability of facilities for making films. Therefore all Film Societies must consider the Report on Monopoly Tendencies in the Film Industry, to discover how monopoly affects both film production generally and the showing and distribution of films in their local area. They should follow this up by inquiring if their Member of Parliament intends to take action, and if necessary they should agitate locally for better distribution of films.

Film Societies should find out how the Ministry of Information film shows are working and developing, so that their members can be informed of this valuable activity. Popular support can help to guard and develop this vital use of films.

Equally important is a full knowledge of the rôle of the Central Film Library and an appreciation of the part that a free, State-controlled, film library can play in developing films, particularly educational films, and in keeping their production on relatively democratic lines.

In several cities the local authorities are considering the production of civic films. Film Societies can campaign to show and explain, to town and council, the part films can play in replanning our cities, in increasing civic responsibility and combating prejudice and ignorance. They should consider it part of their work to see that these are good films, made by the best possible technicians. Similarly they might interest themselves in the wider use of educational and scientific films. These activities, and the building of programmes, can be helped by joining the Scientific Film Association.

BILL MASON